

THE CREATION OF "MR. MOORE": A MEMOIR

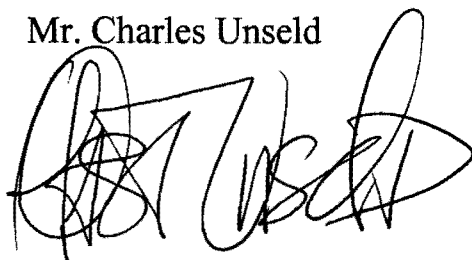
An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

Matthew K. Moore

Thesis Advisor

Mr. Charles Unseld

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Charles Unseld", with a large, stylized initial "C" and "U".

Ball State University
Muncie, IN

April, 2004

May 8, 2004

Abstract

As I stand on the verge of graduating from college, I can't help but think about my high school graduation. I never in a million years would have guessed that I would end up at Ball State University, with a degree in Elementary Education.

My goal in this thesis is to let you inside my head and my life as I traveled along aimlessly from college to college without a true direction. What events and experiences have shaped me into the person that I am today?

I will begin the thesis by informing my reader of what a memoir is. After introducing memoirs, I will introduce myself, my family, and give a brief background of my life. I will take the reader on a bumpy ride beginning with my senior year in high school, and ending with my college graduation in Muncie, Indiana. The reader will witness what experiences led me to enroll, and attend, four different universities. Because a memoir focuses on not what is going on, but how it shapes the writer, I will explain my thoughts and feelings throughout the past six years.

Acknowledgements

I would first like to thank my parents for having me, without them I wouldn't be here today.

Also, I would like to thank Mr. Charles Unseld for his assistance and support with this project. Thank you for encouraging me to reflect on my past experiences and create a memoir.

Finally, thank you so much to Krista at the Writing Desk. Together, we took my past six years and created an Honors thesis. I couldn't have done it without you!

**PREFACE:
WHAT IS A MEMOIR?**

The word comes from “memoria” which means memory in Latin. But a memoir is more than just a memory; it is a memory that is given significance by the author.

“Memoir is a genre in which the writer shares a memory from his or her life and indicates, through graceful writing, why or how the memory is significant to them” (Seymour, par. 8). Additionally, the memory could be a major event, but usually is something relatively small or subtle.

A memoir is how writers look back to the past and make sense of it. While writing my memoir, I had the opportunity to figure out who I was, who I have become, and what it means to be me: a memoir puts the events of the writer’s life in perspective for the writer and for him or her who read it. It is a way for us to communicate to others the events of our lives – choices, perspectives, decisions, and attitudes.

However, a memoir is not an autobiography. According to John Edwards,

The autobiographer tells his/her life story, from beginning to end. A memoir deals with a theme that may be handled in a brief period of time or stretched out over a lifetime. Finally, memoir is not entertainment, although the writing may be entertaining. Memoir is not written to please the reader – it is not fanciful, imaginary or invented. (par. 4)

If the writer’s content is not factual, the writing is not a memoir.

Living life can be difficult, enjoyable, sad, exhilarating, and fearful, to name just a few of the many feelings that come from experiences. Often different and conflicting feelings come at once. Sometimes we think that we are the only one to have had this experience. SeniorNet explains that, “By telling the stories of our past, we often find that

the same thing, or nearly the same thing, or something completely different, has happened to other people” (par. 7).

Bill Seymour informs us that, “In a memoir, of equal or greater importance to what happened are the writer’s perceptions – the thoughts, feelings, associations, and digressions that the memories of those events draw forth” (par. 3). That is, the writer of the memoir is trying to express not, “What I did,” but, “What it felt like/feels like to be me.” The writer must master the same elements of storytelling (character, plot, dialogue, description) as a fiction writer, if he/she wants to capture a reader’s attention.

“Who writes the memoir is just one of the big differences between memoirs and the autobiography” (SeniorNet, par. 9). Successful memoirs usually have a narrow scope. The writer looks closely at a single aspect of life, such as childhood, a significant relationship, or, in my case, surviving a particular struggle. “It turns out that people want to read about people like themselves – people who may have had extraordinary (or ordinary) experiences, but could still be their neighbors or people with whom they went to school” (Edwards, par. 2). The only real prerequisite you need in order to start writing a memoir is to be a thinking, feeling, human being.

When you sit down to begin working on a memoir: First, remind yourself that you are not writing your autobiography: You do not have to write your entire life. So begin thinking in terms of theme and focus. Second, get into an opinionated, or at least questioning, frame of mind. Third, go to the library and check out a few good memoirs to read. And finally, above all, remember that it’s essential to find your voice.

CHAPTER 1

THE CREATION OF MATTHEW KEVIN MOORE

“A memoir is not what happens but the person to whom things happen.”

Virginia Woolf

Zip it up and zip it out. Good, you haven't put the paper down yet. I guess that means I'm doing something right. Now that I have your attention, maybe I should introduce myself. My name is Matthew Kevin Moore. I'm writing this paper from the sandy beaches of Muncie, Indiana. Just kidding. As I glance out the windows of 901 W. Ashland, I cringe. It's still snowing. Old man winter dumped about 8 inches on us a few days ago. It snowed all of last night, today, and I'm beginning to think it might never stop. I know a lot of you are thinking, "8 inches? This kid doesn't know the meaning of winter!" Yeah, you're probably right. You have to understand though, I am a warm weather person. In the words of the great Bob Marley, "Sun is shining, the weather is sweet, make you want to move your dancin' feet."

My Mom and Dad are middle-class parents who have worked their entire lives making sure that their children have everything they had and so much more. They are a success. Andrew, my younger brother and I have everything we could possibly need. Maybe not financially speaking, but there is much more to life than the balance of your bank statement. My parents believe in family and hard work. I wish the world were full of parents like mine; it would certainly be a much better place.

On August 15, 1983, I was one proud big brother when Andrew John Moore was born. I still am proud. Andrew followed me up Highways 41, 70, and 69 to get to Ball State University. We live together today with two of our friends, and a cat named Romanoski. His friends call him "Romo" for short. But I'm jumping too far ahead. Andrew and I had the traditional brotherly relationship growing up. Being older, I had the responsibility to beat him up on a regular basis. I handled this responsibility, but would never have let anything happen to him by anyone other than me. Still wouldn't.

We had another addition to our family when I was in the eighth-grade. My parents finally caved in and agreed to let my brother and I get a kitten, based on the condition that we would assume sole responsibility. I think my parents are still waiting for our responsibility. My brother and I selected a tiger-looking, 4-week-old kitten. “Rajah” was adorable, and my family and I were hooked. Today Raj still lives with my mom and dad, he’s like their third son.

From my experience, I feel that a pet is a wonderful addition to any family. A pet is a shared responsibility, and therefore, a shared bond. Pets provide a central focus for families. No matter what is going on pets can also be a release of tension, stress, or anxiety. Both Rajah and Romanowski have been wonderful pets. One thing that I have never had, though, is a dog. I can’t wait to get a dog!

So here you have Mom, Dad, Andrew, Rajah, and myself. Where did we live? Good question, I’m glad that you asked. My family and I lived in the same house for 23 years. Our house was a perfect, 3-bedroom in a quite neighborhood in Evansville. For those of you who don’t know, Evansville is the third largest city in Indiana and is located in the Southwestern part of the state, on the banks of the Ohio River. Evansville will always be home to me. Our perfect house was on the east side of town, just off of Alvord Blvd. Those of you who are familiar with Evansville know the street well, or should. I think of Alvord as the best street in the city. I’ve probably ridden my bike, and driven my car up that tree-lined boulevard more times than I can count. This small community provided the foundation of my childhood: basketball in the backyard, throwing the tennis ball and catching it against the garage door, cops and robbers with the neighborhood kids, bike rides, and school. I had everything a kid could want. I wish that every elementary-

age child could have what I had. As a person on the verge of having his first classroom, I realize that this is a dream.

I was talking to a good friend of mine the other day. We were discussing children. My friend is not married, and used to be a youth minister at a church near my house and has recently adopted two children. The two of us were wondering why children have it so bad today? Why does it seem like parents just don't care? I have seen many cases where it is obvious to me that the child is not the most important thing in the parent's life. Many of you know what I am talking about. My friend offered the theory that the majority of children in this country were not brought into this world because of love. Many children are "mistakes," and have to live with this label for years to come. My brother and I were not mistakes. We were gifts, blessings, and therefore treated like ones to this very day. My years growing up were unbelievably perfect, and I would go back to them in a second. Think about that childhood life: money and responsibility had no meaning. What adults wouldn't want to go back to that?

I think that I have given you a fairly decent rundown of my up bringing. Where am I today, you might be asking? Like I said earlier, I am a student at Ball State University. I am only two months from graduation. I am 24 years old. I have a girlfriend named Marci; she means the world to me. I love her more and more each day. We have been together over two and a half years now. Don't tell her, but I plan on asking her to marry me this summer. Marci also has a wonderful family and I can't wait to be a part of it. My parents still live in Evansville, but in a different house. When my brother and I moved out to go to school they decided that they needed something different from the house in which we grew up. My parents were tired of the stairs, and

the huge trees with endless leaves to rake and pick up. Although I will always miss my old house, my parents are enjoying their new home in a quiet subdivision. I am happy for them.

Currently, I'm in the job-hunting process. Applications, resumes, cover letters, references, and letters of recommendations are enough to make anyone sick. Job-hunting, combined with my four classes, keep me busy but it's nothing that I can't handle. I'm pacing myself nicely and have plenty of time to "enjoy" my last semester in college. Most seniors are ready to graduate, ready to move on, ready to enter into the "real world." Not me. Not us.

What is the "real world?" I don't really think that I want to know, but it doesn't sound like it's for kids. I think that is what I am, a big kid. Unfortunately, this kid does have to get a real job next year.

I'm hoping to find a teaching job in Evansville. This way I can live at home, save money, and start planning for the wedding and our future. It's a pretty good plan I think, and hopefully one that finds me on a sunny beach with a beer in my hand. Marci and I have talked about moving somewhere in the Southeast and living for a few years before starting a family and moving closer to home. We're going to have a wonderful life together!

My goal in this thesis is to let you inside my head and my life. After this brief introduction, I will pick up with my senior year in high school. I will closely look at the events and experiences that have led me to where I am today. So sit back, relax, and enjoy the creation of Mr. Moore.

CHAPTER 2

BOSSE HIGH SCHOOL

“Happiness is the meaning and the purpose of life, the whole aim and end of human existence.”

Aristotle

My high school years were full of happiness, friends, and the occasional mischief. I was a good student, finished with a respectable 3.6 GPA, but never really had to work that hard. It's amazing what can be accomplished having never really taken a book home. I was in the "honors" classes, whatever that meant. Actually, what that meant was according to standardized test scores from earlier years in my development, I proved to be worthy of "higher" classes. At most high schools in Evansville, students are grouped into three categories: honors, advanced, and "the rest." They don't call them the rest, but I'm not really sure if they even have a title. It amazes me what these classifications mean. By being categorized, as "honors," I was considered one of the most intelligent students in my class. It also meant that I had a better chance of being "popular," compared to someone in a lower category. I would say that for the most part the higher a student was on this scale, the more accepted he/she was socially. Of course there are always some exceptions to the rule. I was not an exception. I was in classes with the smarter group. That meant that for the majority of the school day, I was with the same 30 people.

You might have guessed by the title of this chapter that I attended Bosse High School. Bosse is the most beautiful high school in Evansville, and I think the best. You have to know, though, that Bosse has a reputation of being a "ghetto" high school. I love how young people misuse this term. "Oh, that movie theater is so ghetto." People really upset me with their lack of cultural diversity and acceptance. Bosse has the highest rate of diversity in the city, and therefore some people think it is a bad school. Once again, people can't help but express their stupidity. I loved Bosse from the moment I set foot on the practice soccer field my freshman year, until the time that I walked down the aisle

and was handed my diploma. Bosse High School taught me the importance of appreciating cultural diversity and I am a better person because of it. I made countless friends, from many different races and cultures, that I still run into today. I don't think people realize how boring this place would be if everyone were the same. Bosse High School is not "ghetto," it is simply full of beautiful architecture and rich in cultural diversity.

Getting back to my classmates, everyone got along. Within this class system there were a few people who not only were in the smartest classes, but they were athletes, physically attractive, and therefore well liked socially. Because of this status, they had many friends, and everyone knew who they were. I think most high schools work on this type of class system, or something like it. Lucky for me, I just happened to be one of these people at the top of the class.

In high school I played three sports. My senior year I was on the tennis team, but I will be the first to tell you that I was pretty bad. Bosse was not exactly a tennis powerhouse. I was just a body, another number to keep the team going and I had a lot of doing just that. It's a great sport one that I still play frequently today. I also earned a letter in baseball all four years of high school. Baseball was a different story, though.

Throughout my childhood, I loved baseball. It was my favorite sport. When I was younger, I had loads of potential. I used to make the all-star teams and thought that I was one of the best. Entering high school, I had great aspirations for baseball. The way I felt about it, I could come in my freshman year and be the starting centerfielder. Well, that's not exactly how it worked out. I played a little my freshman year, mostly in pinch-running opportunities – not exactly the glamour that I was looking for. To make a long

story short, my baseball career didn't exactly flourish in high school. I stuck it out, made terrific friends, and ended up receiving my varsity letter by my senior year.

Just as my baseball career was beginning to peter out, another career was blossoming. My father had molded me into an athlete from the time I was five years old, my first year on the soccer field. When my soccer career ended after a heartbreaking loss in the sectionals, I was an award-winning player. I was named First-Team All-City, and All-Conference my senior year. I think this is one of my greatest accomplishments to date. I mentioned earlier that Bosse was not a tennis school, and it really wasn't a soccer school either. My freshman year we did win a few games, and even made it to the sectional final. My sophomore and junior years were filled with losses too many to count. We were a young team, but by my final year, we had 11 seniors and we all believed that it was our turn to win. Our record my senior year was 8-5-3, nothing to write to USA Today about but everyone who was associated with the team was proud of our accomplishments. Being one of the captains on the team, I felt that that soccer team was my team, and I loved those guys.

Athletics opened the door for me to begin high school. I was scared to death, as most eighth-graders are. The one thing that made the transition easier was soccer. Soccer practices started before the actual school year. I made friends with upper-classmen and when I entered the building on the first day, there were people, older people, who were familiar and welcoming to me. I'll never forget the way those guys welcomed me into high school by giving me rides and taking me to the football games. Later in my career, I was proud to be the welcoming committee for a new group of fresh, young, and terrified faces. I would almost say that athletics taught me just as much as

classes. Athletics teaches us about relationships, hard work, sacrifice, commitment, and the list goes on. You won't find any of these topics on the school curriculum, but learning them is a necessity for development and success in life.

No matter how fun high school was, I think that for most of us, by the time the end of senior year rolls around, we are ready for the next step. I certainly was one of those people. By the end of my senior year, I was itching for new things. I wanted a new place, new friends, and new challenges. One of the hardest decisions a high school junior or senior has to make is choosing a college. I find it ridiculous that high school seniors are supposed to know what career path they will pursue. Think about this: how many of us know who we are and what we want to do with our lives at the age of 17? Yes, some people are born to teach or be a doctor. What about the rest of us who have no idea?

When I was a senior, I didn't really know, so my loving parents decided that they would give me ideas. Some suggestions were pharmacist, lawyer, and business professional. Finally, the profession of physical therapy was suggested. Again, I was really unsure and the thought of working with high school athletes and sports-related injuries didn't sound too bad. I did some job shadowing and figured, "Why not?"

Not only are high school seniors asked to pick a future path, but a college at which to begin that path. I began looking at colleges close to Evansville that offered a four-year physical therapy program. I went on a few colleges visits with my family. These visits included mom and dad fighting over a map and which speaker to attend next, while I lagged behind checking out the women.

I want to stop briefly for a bit of wisdom. When it comes time for my children to select a college, I think I am going to try a different approach. What I plan to do is travel

with my child to the university. I'm going to wake my child up at 9 a.m. with a daily agenda. On this agenda will be a list of things they need to do: meet with an advisor, eat two meals, purchase a souvenir, tour a dorm, visit the recreation facilities, check out the technology in a computer lab, etc. This agenda will not say where, who, or how to get these objectives complete. I will then give him/her a time to meet me after all of these items are successfully completed. This is a true representation of college, minus the parties and drinking of course. Visiting a college this way would give the high school student a better understanding of the University's environment independently. Were the people friendly? Did I enjoy myself? Was it easy to meet people? Was the food good? Do I really want to be stuck here? I see too many times, and this happened to me, parents walking with their children on college campuses. But this is not a realistic representation. They are not going to be in this place with their child so why are they with him/her right now?

Had my parents offered me this challenge in choosing my college I would like to think that I would not have selected Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, or IUPUI. So there I am, a high school graduate, ready to head off to Indianapolis to study physical therapy. I still remember moving into the dorm. Ball Hall, the only residence hall on campus. For those of you who might not know, IUPUI is a commuter school. That explains only one dorm. Don't worry, if you don't know what a commuter school is, you're not alone. You will find out when you read the next chapter as I did when I arrived.

My parents and brother helped me move all of my stuff in to my single room. I was set. I said goodbye to my brother, hugged my dad, and kissed my mom as she

prepared to leave her oldest son for the first time. Yes, she cried. They walked out the door, down the hall, got into the van and were gone.

CHAPTER 3

IUPUI

“The ultimate measure of man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.”

Martin Luther King, Jr.

As I mentioned, IUPUI is a commuter school. A commuter school, as I would find out way too quickly, is a school where the students do not live on campus. The majority of IUPUI students would drive from where they lived. Normally, students lived in the surrounding city and its outskirts, and they traveled sometimes hours to attend classes. As I still tell people today, students of IUPUI would drive to school, attend class, and drive home. Home is where they had friends, family, and the support group they needed. As a person just graduating from high school and moving three hours away from home, that is where my support group was: three hours away.

My lone support in the city of Indianapolis was a friend of mine from high school. Justin graduated from Bosse a year before I did. Justin was not the most traditional of students and was known for his wild ideas and crazy schemes. He decided that he would move to Indianapolis, take a few classes at IUPUI, and get a job at a local radio station. Justin was a talented Disc Jockey, a very loveable and humorous character on the radio. He truly had a gift and was born to be a DJ, in my mind. My friend did follow through with his idea to rent an apartment in Indianapolis. He purchased a one-bedroom apartment around 21st Street and College Avenue. Any of you who are familiar with the Indianapolis area realize that this apartment wasn't in the best location. Justin and I later found out, from the police, that it was in a neighborhood with the highest drug and prostitution rate in the state. No joke, I find it funny looking back on this and I enjoy telling this to people. I get reactions like, "Wow, that must have been rough." It wasn't that bad, apart from the occasional gun shot outside the window or random homeless person asking for change. Looking back, I am surprised that as I rode my bike to and

from school, about two miles sometimes at night, that I was never jumped, beaten up, or worse.

Shortly after school began, Justin realized that going to college wasn't the thing for him. Aside from this, the radio station gig that he supposedly had lined up fell through. Justin realized that since he was not going to school and didn't have a job, there was really no reason, except for the apartment, to be in Indianapolis.

I had been spending all my time away from the dorm because my comfort zone was with my friend from high school. I didn't know anyone on campus, in the dorm, or in my classes. I had been content to have one good friend with whom I spent my time. I would wake up on Justin's futon, ride my bike to campus, head over to my dorm room to get a change of clothes or a change of school books, and then ride back to the apartment. Knowing what I know now, this was my biggest mistake. I should have stayed in the dorm, made friends, and been more outgoing in class. But I can't change the past.

I was heading for big trouble, and trouble came quickly. I mentioned how my friend came to the conclusion that there was no reason for him to be in Indianapolis without school or a job. In the following months after school began, Justin traveled from Evansville to Indianapolis only a few times. He spent the majority of his time at home; I spent the majority of my time, alone. I quickly discovered that the emotion of loneliness is one of the worst a person can have. I made another mistake when signing up for classes: wanting something totally different from high school, and not being a morning person, I decided that I would sign up for mostly night classes. Let me tell you what kinds of students attend night classes at a commuter school, the kind of students that have full-time jobs during the day. These students not only have full-time jobs, but also

families of their own. My classmates couldn't care less about an 18-year-old kid sitting beside them. This fact, needless to say, made it very difficult to create relationships with my fellow classmates.

After Justin decided that he would be spending the majority of his time in Evansville, I decided that it would be better for me to try to spend more time in my dorm room. However, just showing up several weeks into the school year I found myself at a disadvantage. Friendships in college are made from the beginning. Ask most college students about their close friends and they will tell you that they made most of their friends the first day, or even the first week of school. Despite that, I was trying desperately to make friends several weeks into the school year with the people that I found living around me. The only thing was, these people weren't my friends. I didn't know the people that I saw.

I missed my high school friends. I missed the people that I had grown up with. I missed the friends from high school who had been in my kindergarten class. I wasn't familiar with these strange new people, and thought they were weird. I wish right now that I could attach some of the photos of the people who were living in the dorm with me that year. I lived between a guy who had a lazy eye and reminded me of a vampire, and a homosexual African-American who looked very much like a turtle. I tried very hard to make friends, but apart from occasional small talk and saying hello in passing, I was on my own. I mentioned before that I had a single room. I tried to keep my door open as much as possible, but usually I just shut the door and surrounded myself with memories of my friends and family. It was awful.

If I had to describe to people my freshman year of college, I would say that I was miserable. I went to movies by myself, ate by myself, and went days without talking to people. I am a person who thrives off interaction with others, but in this scenario I had none. My classes were going just fine for the most part, but achieving to one's potential is hard without motivation. I was forced to drop my chemistry class because 40 percents on tests were not acceptable. Not only was it rough not having many friends, but the city itself wasn't opening itself up either.

We all have been in a place that we did not recognize. Most of us have been in a situation of unfamiliarity. However, even fewer people have had to face this unfamiliarity alone. On numerous occasions, I would find myself in my car, in the city, only to realize I was lost. Being lost, alone, in a big city, is one of the worst feelings a person can have. These situations brought along feelings of emptiness and anxiety. I was having a very rough time.

My parents were very supportive and encouraging through the whole experience. As one person put it, "Image what it was like for them knowing that their son was miserable." Mom and dad encouraged me to stick with it, that I could do it, but I wasn't sure. I e-mailed friends on a frequently, just to keep some connection to the outside world, a world I felt that I no longer belonged to. I talked to friends on Instant Messenger, and everyone I talked to seemed to be having a much different experience than mine. How could it be that I had been so popular and so beloved in high school, and now all of that was gone? I didn't understand how in my high school everyone knew who I was, and wanted to be my friend, but here in this unfamiliar place I was no body.

No one wanted to be friends with me and no one cared who I was. I was nothing, or at least that's how I felt.

On one Saturday night, I couldn't take it any longer. I started my car.

Destination: Home. I had visited since moving in August, but never without warning.

My parents were surprised and glad to see me, but the conversation that followed was a difficult one for all of us. My parents knew that I was unhappy at IUPUI, but had never been told face-to-face with that much emotion. I told my parents everything,

emphasizing that I was miserable and wanted to come home at the end of the semester.

I'm still not exactly sure how they did it, but they convinced me to give it another shot.

They told me that I could do it and that they would be supporting me the whole way. My parents said that after the second semester, if I still wanted to transfer, we could look into other options. I agreed, reluctantly, knowing that it certainly was not going to be easy.

I will never forget the next day. There I was, a 19 year-old kid, getting into his car, being forced to drive three hours to a place where he knew no one and certainly did not want to be. Pulling away from my home, the house I grew up, everything hit me. I will be honest, I cried for the first twenty minutes of the trip. How was I going to make it another semester on my own?

A few weeks later I was able to return home for Thanksgiving break.

Thanksgiving had never meant so much to me. I didn't know it at the time, but I was starting to learn things that only life experiences can teach you. I learned the meaning of family and togetherness, something that I had always enjoyed but never fully appreciated. At the end of Thanksgiving break, I was to give my friend a ride back to her school. This friend's name is Kate and she attended the University of Miami in Ohio. Kate was my

oldest and one of my best friends. Kate and I had been friends since kindergarten and, although we attended different high schools, still remained best friends.

Kate had been driven home by a friend from Miami, but I gladly volunteered my services to take her back. I didn't care in the slightest that it was an hour and a half out of my way. I knew what I was returning to, and was glad for the extra companionship that this trip would provide. You have heard what kind of situation I was in at IUPUI, and you can't blame me for needing someone. I desperately needed a person to be with. I needed someone who could remove the loneliness that was inside me. In Indianapolis I would talk to family, friends, and pretty much anyone I knew and could get a hold of by phone and e-mail. I needed someone, and I thought that Kate was this person. Kate had recently broken up with her boyfriend from high school. Kate and Sean had been together for 9 months, an eternity for a high school relationship. All the pieces added up for me. I desperately needed someone; Kate was no longer seeing anyone. And this trip would be the spark that I was looking for.

The trip back to Miami was going excellently. Kate and I were talking and laughing, having a good time like old friends. I wish that we could have stayed in that car forever. I knew that eventually reality would set in. I would drop one of my best friends off at her school, and return to the nightmare that was my own. We arrived back at Miami too soon for my liking, and I helped Kate bring her stuff back to her dorm room. Kate introduced me to her friends at school, we watched television, and I even purposely flirted around. Keep in mind, I needed someone. It was getting late as Kate walked me out to my car. The two of us made small talk, the kind made prior to an obvious goodbye. When the time was right, I gathered up all the courage I had. I

decided at that moment I was going to kiss my oldest and dearest friend. As I leaned in to kiss Kate, I could never in a million years have anticipated a worse outcome. Knowing my intentions, Kate turned her head to the side, rejecting my kiss and rejecting my attempt at a possible future for us as more than best friends. I don't think I can put into words the hurt and pain that entered my heart at that moment. I'll never forget Kate's words, "I just can't right now. I don't think it's a good time. I hope that this doesn't mess things up between us." All I could do at that moment was hug Kate, tell her goodbye, and promise her that I would call her when I made it back to Indianapolis. I knew that even though this was my oldest friend, I would have to wait until we were apart to allow my heart to break.

I thought that I loved her, and whether I did or not was not the reason for my heartbreak. My heart broke that night because more than anything in the world I needed someone. My heart broke because I thought kissing Kate would somehow connect us. I thought that even though I was returning to IUPUI we would still be connected, and because of this she would get me through everything. My heart broke because I knew that I was alone again.

Imagine this scenario: it's late on Sunday night, you were just shot down by your best friend, you have an hour and a half drive ahead of you. Your destination is hell, as soon as you get back to hell you have to unpack and start an English paper that is due on Monday. I will be honest with you, while driving down that unfamiliar country road, more than anything else, I wanted to drive my car off the planet. I couldn't see how things could get any worse. I'm not sure what kept my car on the road that night. I would like to think that my mind and my heart knew that if things were in the basement

there was only one direction that they could go. Even though things looked bad -- very bad -- I would not give up. I made it back safely to Indianapolis, called Kate to let her know that I had arrived, cursing her under my breath. I slowly unpacked the car and finished my English paper.

Second semester at IUPUI was much more of the same: misery. However, this time I did make a few friends, none that could take the place of my high school friends, but people who were able to get me through the semester. I've never had a tougher nine months than those. I wish that I had kept track of how many meals I ate alone, how many movies I attended solo, and how many days that passed without laughter. I kept a running countdown of the days that I had remaining until I could move from this place and never return. I talked to my parents frequently, but thought it would be better not to talk every day. I dedicated most of my time to finding the college that would be right for me. I decided that although I had struggled in some of my early physical therapy classes I would continue on the PT path. I researched schools across the country with a PT program.

In addition to the college search, I also took to attending mass every Sunday. My parents had always forced -- and I mean forced -- my brother and I to go to church when we were young. I hated going to church, it always seemed too boring and pointless. My second semester at IUPUI, when the days on the countdown were getting fewer and fewer, something dawned on me. I began to realize that I had almost made it through this rough time in my life. I can't say that one specific thing made me want to go to church, but it was those last few months in Indianapolis that pushed me to begin attending church on my own. I didn't have anyone to wake me up and force me to go, I just went because

I wanted to go. I think that's how it's meant to be. Sure, parents can force their children to go to church, but until the child, or in this case adult, wants to go for his/her own reasons, it is meaningless. I think those first few masses had the most significant impact on my life. I realized that God was with me and that he had been with me during this miserable time in my life. Since those first Sundays, I have attended church regularly and I now realize that everything I have on this earth has been given to me by God.

In addition to religion and perseverance, my nine months in Indianapolis taught me independence. It wasn't until later on that I realized that that is a good characteristic to have. Independence is gained by not having to rely on other people, because you never know when you will be in a situation when those other people aren't around.

As my days in Indianapolis were winding down, I did not say goodbye to anyone. I had no one who would miss me, and in return I would miss nothing about the place that I forced myself to be for almost a year. I would return to Indianapolis for various reasons afterward, but there has never been a time when those feelings of emptiness, loneliness, and misery haven't surfaced when I return.

When trying to decide what college I would attend next, I looked at all my options. I looked at PT schools far away and others not so far away. The one thing that I couldn't overlook was the fact that I had an excellent physical therapy school right in my back yard. The University of Evansville seemed like it would be the perfect fit. I would return home, live in the comfort of my "nest," and be reunited with everything that I had longed for throughout the past nine months. I was accepted to the university, received a scholarship or two to decrease the financial strain on my parents, and signed up for

classes the following fall. One thing was for certain, no more IUPUI. I was happy to be back at home, and promised that I would never put myself in a situation like that again.

CHAPTER 4

UNIVERSITY OF EVANSVILLE

“Life is not life unless you make mistakes.”

Joan Collins

The University of Evansville (UE), is a small private school in my hometown. UE is on the east side of town, located just minutes from the house in which I grew up. Back in high school, going to UE never really appealed to me. It was a good school but I thought I needed more; I wanted to get out of town and experience the world. Well I experienced the world, and it bit me in the ass. So now what I needed was home. As I mentioned, the University of Evansville was a reputable school that had a physical therapy program. At the time, I was fairly sure that I still wanted to continue in that field.

Before setting foot on UE's campus, though, I had a great experience with my summer job as a lifeguard at a nearby public pool. Now this was a small pool, no waterslides or wave pools or anything, just one diving board and a baby pool. I had a blast being a lifeguard and enjoyed getting to know the other people I worked with over the summer. There was a manager, 25, one head guard, 19, and four other guards, 15 and 16. Laura, the head guard, and I, looked up to Jeremy, the manager, and the rest of the guards looked up to us. Throughout the summer, other guards came and went on occasion. If someone had to go out of town on vacation, they would call around and get a sub guard. Towards the middle of the summer, a beautiful girl named Marci Fenneman came to the pool. Although I didn't know it then, my life would be forever changed and I would find that person that I desperately needed. She would be the first to tell you that I tried to pick her up by giving her my number. The rest of the summer we spent time together becoming friends and getting to know one another. We were friends, and that's how it was left as she went off to begin her freshman year at Butler University, in the infamous Indianapolis, and I started my sophomore year at UE.

The University of Evansville wasn't what I thought it was going to be. I was living at home which made me very happy, but when you live at home you miss out on the campus life. Although I was content to spend time with my family and friends that I knew from high school, I made the mistake again of not getting to know people at school. I thought that everything I needed I could get away from home.

One of my school-related, extra-curricular activities was managing the soccer team. Again, this wasn't the best experience. I told you that when I was in high school, I was the captain of the soccer team, first-team All-City, and first-team All-Conference. I guess I didn't know that I would go from being the soccer star, to washing the soccer stars' uniforms. It was a humbling experience for me because I knew that I could compete with those guys. I might not have been the best player on that team, but I don't think I would have been the worst either. Watching them play every day was difficult for me, and I was stuck chasing balls and washing practice jerseys. That took a lot of my free time my first semester at UE and I was sure glad when it was over.

Classes at UE were much more difficult than the classes at IUPUI, and certainly harder than Bosse. My first semester I took classes, like Chemistry, after having to drop it at IUPUI. I also took Biology, which only lasted a couple of weeks. That class sure was tough, and I tip my hat to anyone who can pull an A or B out of that class. I was also taking "core" classes. Towards the end of my first semester I decided that physical therapy and all of the impossible science classes weren't for me. Everyone has to work on the "core" classes, so that's what I figured I would do. One thing that I didn't mention about the University of Evansville is how expensive it is. Attending UE and taking only the general courses, without a real direction, isn't the best idea.

My second semester at UE, I enrolled in French, Philosophy, Music, Chemistry, and Theatre. I wasn't sure what I wanted to do with my life, but I knew that it had nothing to do with the classes that I was required to take. Knowing this most certainly affected my motivation. Why care about a French class if it has nothing to do with my future, if I couldn't care less about French? My grades remained steady, but I knew that I wasn't doing the best I could.

Getting down to the end of my second semester at UE, I was in trouble, again. The University was pressuring me to sign up for next year's classes. My only concern was; what classes should I take? What do I want to do with my life? Questions like these made flipping through the course book very difficult. I realized that I had a lot of questions and I sure could use some help answering them. One person at the University I liked and respected was, oddly enough, my French professor. I didn't like what he was saying, but I enjoyed him as a person and liked the way he communicated to the class and others.

One day after class, I approached Dr. Hemminger and asked him if he had some time to speak with me. Bill, as I would soon call him asked me, "What about right now?" I know a lot of professors who wouldn't have been so forward about helping me. I can hear them now, "Well, my office hours are from 7:00-8:00 on Friday. E-mail me and I'll see what we can work out." Not Bill. Bill and I went straight up to his office to discuss my struggles. Later, we would arrange meetings at Starbucks and even the side porch of his home just down the street.

The two of us discussed the problems I experienced in Indianapolis, and the difficulty I was having at UE. I told him that I was being forced to sign up for classes

without knowing which direction I was heading. Bill offered me numerous suggestions, but the one that stuck out most was to take some time off. I think that is good advice for students my age, but scary for their parents. Society dictates that after high school you go to college, after college you get a job. Nowhere does it include anything about taking time off. Bill informed me that what I was going through was normal and not really a big deal.

After Bill and I had met several times, he offered another suggestion. I still remember sitting in his office when he said, “Have you ever thought of education?” I consider this the birth of “Mr. Moore.” I pondered his question long and hard, and can still remember the feeling inside me. I did like communicating with people, enjoyed showing others how to do things and, most importantly, I wanted to do something that would make a difference. I knew from then on that education would be my calling. I finished the semester at UE, but when classes began next fall I would not be found on its campus, or any campus.

CHAPTER 5

THE GAME PLAN / UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN INDIANA

“What’s important is finding out what works for you.”

Henry Moore

Two years, two colleges.

My parents were starting to get worried. They remained supportive, but were skeptical when I told them “the plan.” The plan is a little complicated, so follow closely. The first part of my plan was to follow Bill’s advice and take a semester off. A semester isn’t a long time, but it was what I needed to get everything to fall into place. During this semester, I would work more than one job and live at home. The next semester, I would enroll in the University of Southern Indiana (USI). USI is a commuter school on the west side of Evansville; although it is a good school, it has a bad reputation in the city. When I was a senior, I thought USI was for the high school graduate who couldn’t go anywhere else. This is not true, and not fair to the University. At USI, I took only education-related courses that I knew would transfer to Ball State University. Huh? Where’s Ball State coming from?

My two best friends, Adam and Ryan, were in similar, but somewhat different, situations. Adam knew that he was pursuing education and planning to transfer to Ball State because that was where his girlfriend attended. Although Ryan wasn’t sure what he was doing, he liked the idea of a fresh start with us at Ball State. The three of us agreed that we would transfer schools and get a house together. Again, my parents were becoming a little apprehensive.

The first part of the plan began by taking a semester off. It was a break from classes, but not much else. I was working at a restaurant during the day, a store in the mall a few nights a week, refereeing youth soccer games, and assistant coaching for my old high school soccer team. During this semester off, I focused on earning money. I really liked the numbers that were beginning to add up in my bankbook, but realized that this wasn’t

the kind of work I wanted to do for the rest of my life. I think most young people in my situation need a similar experience. Give a high school senior a tough, low-paying job, and if that doesn't send him/her running to college, nothing will. Oh yeah, I also wanted to get my pilot's license, so I was pursuing that too.

I kept my promise to enroll at USI the following spring semester. I talked to advisors from Ball State who knew my situation. They helped me look at the USI course book, my transcript, and they told me exactly what classes I could take at USI that could count for Ball State credit. USI worked well for me and after one semester, I was back on track.

Three years, three colleges. I was on record-setting pace.

Throughout this directional year Marci and I continued to build our friendship. She was enjoying her college experience in Indianapolis while I was still looking for my first true one. Our friendship bloomed by talking regularly on the phone, chatting on the computer, and getting together when she came home. We were good friends, and the thought of anything more had never been discussed.

Yet.

CHAPTER 6

JULY 4, 2001

“Love is like an eternal flame, once it is lit, it will continue to burn for all time.”

Kamila

Marci and I were best friends and that's all, nothing more. On the 4th of July, we were making plans to go to the river to watch the fireworks. She called me and told me that she was going with a group of friends and wanted to know if I wanted to join them. Being good friends, I could honestly tell her that I really didn't want to go, because I've never been a big fan of fireworks. I told her to have a good time and give me a call when they were finished. Later, at about 10:00 p.m., I was having a beer and watching a movie. Marci called me and invited me to go with her and a few other people to a friend's house. I stopped the movie, finished the beer, and got dressed. Marci and a few friends of hers came to pick me up, and took the two of us to her car. They dropped Marci and me off at her car and told us that they would see us at the house. Marci and I headed to a gas station, liquor store, and then to meet our friends.

For a while, we sat around drinking, basically just having a good time. As some people turned in for the night, I asked Marci if she wanted to sit on the porch with me. It was a beautiful night and the two of us sat outside talking. Minutes turned to hours. The subject of "Us" was never discussed, but that didn't stop what was destined to happen.

On the porch, on the fourth of July, two best friends kissed for the first time. The kissing continued, and eventually led to the two of us asleep, under the moonlight, in each others' arms. Marci and I discussed the kiss a few days later and decided that we would see where it would lead. That kiss was the beginning of something that will last forever.

CHAPTER 7

BALL STATE UNIVERSITY

“The future belongs to those who live intensely in the present.”

Anon

Adam, Ryan, and I all moved to Muncie, Indiana in August of 2001. We moved into a three-bedroom house, 901 W. Ashland, that would soon be transformed into our home. The three of us would live there for the next two years, while Adam and I continued pursuing our degrees in Elementary Education and Ryan went from Math Education to plain Math. At Ball State, I had found the motivation that I lacked at my first two colleges. I made friends in my classes, participated in intramurals, and enjoyed the all-around college experience. I even landed the perfect job working for University Computing Services my first week in Muncie. I started out as a Lab Assistant, but have since been promoted to Lab Supervisor. I really enjoy Ball State because it provides me with both the big school and small school environment all in one place. It's everything I need. In the classroom, I have excelled and I am now winning scholarships and being recognized as one of the outstanding graduating seniors in my class.

Adam and Ryan both moved out last year, but the house is still my home. I now live with my brother and two guys his age from our old high school. I love it. I'm getting ready to propose to Marci and am currently looking for a teaching job. My goal is to have one by the time I graduate.

Long story short, look how far I've come: starting out as the 18-year-old in Indianapolis and becoming this 24-year-old in Muncie. I have come to realize the way people learn is through life experiences. I was a miserable kid who turned into a confident man. This confident man is now excited to begin his career as a professional educator. I can take everything that I have learned about myself, and life, and pass it on to children who will look up to me and need me. These past six years have taught me the

value of having caring people to love and support you; I have learned to never, ever, give up.

I did not take the traditional college path. I took the one less traveled. And that has made all the difference...

The Road Not Taken

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth.

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same.

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I--
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

Robert Frost (1874-1963)

References

Edwards, John. What is a Memoir? Erie's Premier Writing Workshop. 14 April 2004.
<http://paper-jam.com/what_is_a_memoir.htm>

SeniorNet. What is a Memoir? SeniorNet Online Courses. 29 March 2004.
<<http://seniornet.org/courses/memoirs1/mmod2.shtml>>

Seymour, Bill. Memoirs. English 101C – Tuesday. 10 April 2004.
<<http://www.southernct.edu/~seymour/nvcc/web/101c-Tues.htm>>